

Hitting Homers

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I recently saw a movie about Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris as they attempted to break Babe Ruth's home run record. It was an interesting and insightful look into the lives of the men who endured the pressure of competing. Through all of it, the two men became close personal friends, each helping the other in different ways.

I didn't get to see the opening minutes of the movie, but as the story unfolded, it was interesting to watch the two men forge a close friendship, even though they were often portrayed as bitter rivals. Mantle was older and more experienced, and many fans rooted him along because he had adapted to life in the limelight. Many of his teammates had seen him develop over the years as he had paid his dues with the team. Yet, it was the younger player who ultimately broke the record.

One thing that was well illustrated in the story was that each of the players, while attempting to break the record, kept his focus on one specific goal. Certainly they wanted to hit homers, but that was not the real reason they were out there. They each kept the larger purpose in mind. That purpose was to help the team win games, and ultimately to win the pennant.

Many times, it is very easy to let our personal goals and achievements overshadow what is really important. In the more recent race between Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire, each broke Maris' record, with McGwire scoring the most homers. The interesting thing is that neither played on a team that was even close to winning the pennant that year. In other words, each player made great achievements individually, but neither was successful in helping their teams to victory.

This is not to say that there is anything wrong with individual achievement. Neither do I think that either should have held back from going for the record simply because their team was not winning. However, we should always focus on the part we play as part of the larger organization. We would hope that our contributions will not only help the team, but will inspire other people. We need to continue to ask ourselves if what we are doing is for our own benefit or if we are contributing to the team goals and missions.

What part are you playing? Are you working in concert with those around you or are you determined to fulfill your own goals, without regard for what the team is committed to doing? A friend of mine said it very well when he told me that his organization had many different people who each had great talents, but each was focused on doing what they did well without making sure it fit in harmony with what the other members were doing. He likened it to an orchestra where each played a different piece well, but no two people were playing the same piece as another. We need to bring all of our talents and skills together to play in harmony together.

Play well and excel, but above all, make sure you are making a contribution to the greater good, not just fulfilling your own goals. I believe that when we work together effectively, our own goals will be fulfilled along the way.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.